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# Presentation of an Address

TO

Mr. THOMAS BAYLEY POTTER, M.P.,

ON BEHALF OF

THE COBDEN CLUB,

WITH THE

Great Free Trade Speech

MADE IN PRESENTING THE ADDRESS BY

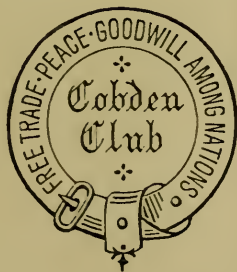
The Right Hon. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.,

AND SPEECHES BY

EARL GRANVILLE (*in the Chair*),

AND BY

MR. POTTER, MISS COBDEN, MR. J. W. PROBYN,  
SIR THOMAS H. FARRER, BART., AND THE RT. HON.  
SIR LYON PLAYFAIR, M.P.



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	Mr. B. Whishaw and Mrs. Whishaw, etc.

### THE HISTORY OF THE ADDRESS.

The presentation of this Address to Mr. Potter was first proposed, at the conclusion of the ordinary business, at the annual general meeting of the Club at the National Liberal Club on the 20th of July, 1889. On that occasion, Mr. Potter having been asked to allow Sir Thomas Farrer to take the chair, the matter of the presentation of an Address to Mr. Potter was proceeded with. Sir Edward Watkin, Bart., M.P., had given the following preliminary explanation of the matter :—

You will remember that a Committee, appointed at our meeting last year, was instructed to arrange for an invitation to our excellent chairman to a public banquet of members of the Club, with a view to testifying their admiration of the untiring labours of Mr. Potter—(cheers)—which have really made the Cobden Club a power in England, on the Continent, and in the United States of America. I am sorry to have to report on behalf of that Committee that, although the necessary arrangements had been made, and we had secured Mr. Gladstone for our chairman, Mr. Potter wounded all our feelings to some extent by declining the honour we intended to pay him. The Committee have instructed me to make an alternative proposal, and later on I shall move that Sir Thomas Farrer take the chair, in order that we may make the suggestion which the Committee has instructed us to make.

The following statement was made by Sir Thomas Farrer, as temporary chairman of the meeting referred to :—

The Committee appointed at the annual meeting last year, 1888, to which reference has been made by Sir E. Watkin, recently instructed Mr. Leadam and myself to draw up an Address for presentation to our president, Mr. Thomas Bayley Potter, expressive of our esteem for him and our appreciation of the valuable services he has performed for the Club.

It was then proposed by Sir Edward Watkin, seconded by Mr. Medley, and unanimously agreed, that the Address should be engrossed and signed on behalf of the members of the Club by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., the Earl Granville, the Right Hon. Sir Lyon Playfair, M.P., Sir Edward Watkin, Bart., M.P., Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Bart., M.P., Sir Thomas H. Farrer, Bart., the Hon. Walter H. James, M.P., Mr. William Summers, M.P., Mr. I. S. Leadam, Mr. G. W. Medley, and Mr. Thomas Ashton, to be presented on a future day.

In pursuance of those proceedings the Address had been engrossed, and was now to be formally presented.

#### LETTERS.

Mr. I. S. LEADAM (Hon. Secretary to the Presentation Committee) read and submitted letters from many members of the Club and others unable to be present at this presentation, expressing interest in the gathering and hearty sympathy in its object.

*Mr. Charles P. Villiers, M.P.*, the veteran Free Trader and associate of Cobden, wrote :—

“I regret to say that in the present state of my health I am entirely precluded from attending any public meeting whatever, and that I cannot, in consequence, be present on the occasion you mention, to which I wish every success.”

Others wrote as follows :—

*Lord Northbrook.*—"I wrote for a ticket for the presentation of the Address to Mr. Potter. I find that I am compelled to attend the quarterly meeting of the Hampshire County Council at Winchester, which will prevent me from having the pleasure of attending at Princes Hall. Will you be so kind as to let Mr. Potter know that I much regret being prevented?"

*M. Yves Guyot* (Paris) expressed his cordial sympathy with the object of the meeting.

*Sir Wilfrid Lawson.*—"I am obliged to return the ticket, as I regret that the necessity of attending the funeral of a near relative in the North on Monday will prevent my attending the Presentation."

*The Right Hon. H. Campbell-Bannerman, M.P.*—"I much regret that I cannot be present when the Address is presented to Mr. Potter on Monday, being chairman of a committee which meets on that day."

*Mrs. Cobden-Sickert.*—"Nothing would have interested me more than to have seen the Presentation to yourself. I am very sorry, indeed, that the state of my health prevents me from coming to London on Monday."

*Miss Margaret Cobden* (in a letter from Winchcombe, Cheltenham, to Mr. Potter).—"You know I should have been most interested and delighted to be present. I am here till about the 21st, and then only go to London for a few days on my way to Marienbad."

*The Chevalier Charles de Scherzer* (Genoa).—"Three cheers and one more for my excellent and distinguished

friend, whose chief aim all his life long has been to promote the welfare of mankind."

*Sir William Wedderburn.*—"I am sorry to say that the change of date prevents my being present, as I must leave town to-morrow."

*Mr. Hamilton A. Hill* (from Boston, U.S. America).—"If the proceedings were to take place a few weeks later, I should hope to be present. As it is, I can only send my hearty congratulations to Mr. Potter on this new and marked appreciation, on the part of his associates and friends, of the great value of his services in behalf of the cause for which the name of Richard Cobden stands."

*Sir Charles Dilke.*—"I have an engagement which cannot be put off, or I should have been tempted to come out of my seclusion to shake hands with you on this occasion."

*Mr. William Woodall, M.P.*—"I regret that I cannot get to the meeting on Monday. Pray include me amongst the reluctant absentees."

*Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth* regretted that unavoidable engagements prevented him from being present.

*Mr. Humphreys Owen* (Montgomeryshire) regretted that County Council business prevented him from attending the meeting.

#### THE ADDRESS.

LORD GRANVILLE, who was received with loud applause upon rising to open the proceedings, said: Ladies and gentlemen, luckily for an old gentleman who has lost his voice, the duties of a chairman are to maintain law and



order in the assembly over which he presides. The principles of the Cobden Club do not tend to develop either disorder or illegality, and my position this day is therefore of the nature of a sinecure, the only exception being an exception very pleasing to myself, and, I believe, to you all—of calling on Mr. Leadam to read the Address, and then of calling upon Mr. Gladstone. (Cheers.)

Mr. LEADAM then read the Address, which was in the following terms :—

*To THOMAS BAYLEY POTTER, Esq., Member of Parliament for the Borough of Rochdale, Honorary Secretary, and Chairman of the Committee, of the Cobden Club.*

SIR,—We, the Members of the Cobden Club, desire at the conclusion of the twenty-fourth year of your chairmanship to record our sense of your indefatigable services both to the Club and to your countrymen at large.

As the son of a distinguished Liberal, Sir Thomas Potter, the first Mayor of Manchester, your earliest recollections are associated with the great cause of Municipal Reform. As the intimate friend of Richard Cobden and of John Bright, your maturer years have been employed in the promotion of those beneficent measures of progress which are the glory of the century, and especially with the economic emancipation of the labouring classes. Like those lamented statesmen, you have actively addressed yourself to the education of the masses. The diffusion of Free Trade literature—of which, at your suggestion and under your guidance, the Cobden Club have been the source—has strengthened the foundations of sound economic thought in the minds of an enfranchised people.

Nor has a policy intended by Nature for the world been, under your leadership, confined to home. In the United States of America the advance towards Free Trade is discerned and denounced by the Protectionists now in power as the outcome of the exposition of those principles of which you are the representative. Though repressed by the financial exigencies of that militarism which Richard Cobden recognised as the foe not less of sound economy than of peace, scientific opinion upon the Continent has long since adopted the doctrines of Free Trade. But the example of foreign war tariffs maintains in activity an undercurrent of Protectionist agitation in this country which enjoys the benevolent regard of some at least of the leaders of the old Party of Monopoly. Of the vitality of this movement the recent endeavour to carry a Bill for the exclusion of cheap sugar was a startling symptom. You, as Honorary Secretary and Chairman of the Committee of the Cobden Club, played no secondary part before the public eye in successful resistance to that design. We, as its members, appreciate in your leadership the experience which guides and the genial sympathy which stimulates. In you we acclaim and follow the friend and fellow-worker of Richard Cobden, the successor to his labours, and the depositary of his traditions. We earnestly trust that for many years to come you may be spared to continue, both in the House of Commons and as Chairman of the Committee of the Cobden Club, that career of public usefulness which has been the honourable distinction of your life.

[The Address, richly illuminated, and contained in a handsome carved frame, was exhibited to the meeting. The following is a description :—

A Cobden Club Address ; the basis of the specially prepared design



is the letter "C," upon which rests the cartouche containing the text of the Address.

Above, a portrait of Cobden is surrounded by the label and motto of the Club, "Free Trade, Peace, Goodwill among Nations"; the portrait is flanked by the Palm Branch, signifying the victory of Free Trade principles which Cobden achieved, and the Olive Branch of that international peace which he laboured to promote. A tablet at the back of the portrait records the dates of Cobden's birth and death.

On the left of this central group, abundant ears of corn bear the inscription "Repeal of the Corn Laws"; on the right hand, "Repeal of the Navigation Laws" leads up to a cornucopia of fruit, typical of some of the foreign produce the importation of which was the outcome of that repeal.

Within the confines of the letter "C" are portraits of four great exponents of Cobden's doctrines; Gladstone, Bright, Villiers, and Wilson, who, together with the recipient of the Address, have brought about or agitated for the various reforms indicated upon the small scrolls intertwined with the ornamentation: "Franchise Extension," associated particularly with Gladstone, Bright, and Villiers; "Arbitration v. War," associated particularly with the two latter statesmen; "Repeal of the Paper Duties," "Education of the Masses," and "Free Trade Abroad." The National emblems, the Rose, Shamrock, and Thistle, are intertwined about these portraits, symbolising the endeavour to apply these measures to the United Kingdom equally.

The left-hand top corner is occupied by the Arms, Crest, and Motto of Rochdale, for which town Cobden, as well as Mr. Potter, sat in Parliament, and with which John Bright also was intimately associated by residence and by many personal and public interests. In the bottom corner of the same side the Arms of London are placed.

The portraits are reduced from cabinet size, and printed by a new and permanent process.

The colouring is also quite permanent, and the work is executed upon vellum.

The design and execution were carried out from the suggestions of Sir Edward Watkin by Mr. W. J. Pearce, 30, Kingswood Road, Penge.]

The reading of the Address was received with loud and protracted applause.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon Mr. Gladstone to present the Address on behalf of the members of the Club.

#### MR. GLADSTONE'S SPEECH.

MR. GLADSTONE rose amidst great cheering. He said: Lord Granville, Mr. Bayley Potter, ladies and gentlemen, when I was honoured with the request that I would undertake to place in the hands of Mr. Bayley Potter the Address that has just been read, I accepted that invitation without hesitation and both with pleasure and with zeal. I do not look upon this, ladies and gentlemen, as simply a political demonstration. (Hear.) In fact, so far as general politics are concerned, I would wish, for the day—or, at all events, for this portion of the day—(laughter and applause)—to lay them aside, and to advert to that which has so well been said in one particular sentence of the Address, and which expresses, I think, the main purposes of our meeting. I need not say, with respect to the general politics of Mr. Bayley Potter, that if we do not on this particular occasion dwell largely upon them, it is not because they are subject, so far as I know, to the smallest suspicion, or can occasion any misgiving. (Hear, hear.) We can assume, I think, that they stand in a thoroughly satisfactory position; and the Liberalism of which he has been a life-long champion is still a steadily advancing cause—(cheers)—more, I am afraid, than can be boldly said for the particular subject that I conceive to be the aim of our meeting here to-day. The sentence I refer to in the Address is this:—"In you we acclaim and follow the friend and fellow-worker of Richard Cobden, the successor to his labours, and the depository of his traditions." (Cheers.) I am thankful to know that the name of Cobden is still worthily represented, as a name, by

his own children (hear, hear) ; but in public life, undoubtedly Mr. Bayley Potter—partly by his succession at Rochdale, and partly by the zeal, earnestness, and wisdom that he has shown in the choice of his means—has established a connection between his own name and that of the distinguished statesman, philanthropist, and economist, such as, I think, no other living man can claim. (Cheers.) I have accepted this office, perhaps, with more zeal than prudence. My title I do not conceive to be a perfect one. In addressing you, my Lord, I address one who has been an unflinching and an instructed Free Trader from the very attainment of the years of discretion. (Cheers.) The case of Mr. Potter is the same. My own is not quite, and has not been quite, so apt. Although I was brought up to admire the incipient Free Trade of Mr. Huskisson and Mr. Canning (hear), yet the traditions of Protectionism were not so completely shaken off but that some of its fetters and some of its recollections hung about me in the earliest years of my public life. It was in the year 1841—and that is a respectable time ago, as you will admit (hear, hear, and laughter)—that Sir Robert Peel sent me, on the formation of his Government—I must own, considerably against my will—to the Department of Trade. From that moment it became my duty to study as hard as I could all the questions connected with our commerce, of which down to that time I had known little or nothing ; and the effect of this study upon my mind was rapid and decisive, for it at once began to act as a powerful solvent upon whatever Protective ideas I had been accustomed to learn and to imbibe (hear, hear) ; and from a very short time after that date, I have fought in the same army as that in which both Lord Granville and Mr. Bayley Potter were older soldiers. I have fought with sincerity. I have had at times no small share of the labour. I have

fought with conviction, and no man has ever felt that conviction to be founded on a more solid basis than is the case with the individual who now addresses you. (Cheers.) Now Free Trade has passed through its varying phases. It had a period of struggle ; it had a period of triumph ; and after its triumph it has now a period of danger. I do not look upon that danger with apprehension as to the ultimate result, but I think it is right that we should recognise it as a period of danger. (Hear, hear.) When I go back to the early time that I have just mentioned, we must recollect that there was something to be said in those days for the gentlemen who then fought the battle of Protection. In a great controversy of this kind, it often takes a long time before the arguments on the two sides are distinctly seen and properly marshalled. It is not surprising that the Protectionists of those days, of the earlier part of the century, should have used bad arguments. It is, rather, more remarkable that all the arguments of the Free Traders were not good. Now, as to the Protectionists, it is really a curious fact, and one worth recording, that when in 1814 the Corn Law, which was the most odious and nearly the most extreme exhibition of Protection ever known in this country—when that Corn Law was proposed by Lord Ripon in the House of Commons (as Mr. Robinson), and by Lord Liverpool in the House of Lords, they made use (I have no doubt with perfect good faith personally)—they made use of this argument. They said :—“All you have to do is to secure to the British farmer the absolute possession of the home market, and the effect of that will be that he will rear for you such vast, abundant, redundant quantities of grain that you will become a great exporting country, and have it cheaper than any other country in the world.” (Laughter.) Now, that is a curious fact. That is on record in the Parliamentary Debates. You won’t be surprised,



therefore, if a little nonsense was talked by those on the side of Protection. But there was at that period a very favourite argument—I mean, before the days of Mr. Cobden—a very favourite argument with the advocates of Free Trade. It was this—and often have I heard it put in the House of Commons: “In the time of the war you had a monopoly of ocean trade, and our manufacturers could do what they pleased. Now that peace is established the ocean is alike open to us all, and it is impossible for our manufacturers to continue their competition with the manufacturers of the Continent as long as they are called upon to pay the high Protection prices for bread; that is to say, as they are called upon to give wages based on high Protection prices for bread.” (Hear, hear.) You will at once see that the weak point in that argument was that it enabled the friends of the Corn Law to reply, as they did reply sometimes with very great effect: “We perfectly understand you. Your object is to lower the wages of your operatives in order that you may better compete with the manufacturers of the Continent.” You will agree with me that was a very bad argument from the point of view of Free Trade. Mr. Cobden threw over that argument altogether. (Hear, hear.) He declined to have anything to do with the question of cheapness or dear-ness. He said, “What we want is freedom of trade.” In point of fact, we see wheat now much cheaper than ever it was in those days; but the great cheapness of wheat at this moment is possibly not owing in so large a degree to freedom of trade as it is to the long continuance of peace and the cheapness of carriage, and Mr. Cobden put this argument on a right footing. From his time onward the country knew what it was about. And, moreover, it is quite true that some economists, even before his time, had seen much of the truth, and probably would not have used such an argument

as that I have referred to about the wages manufacturers were compelled to pay in order to enable operatives to live. But those economists were persons who had no faculty for conveying their ideas to the public mind and of making them the property of the people at large. That great work was performed by Cobden ; and when Sir Robert Peel, on that memorable day when he made that striking acknowledgment at the close of his Ministry in 1846, that the credit of the triumph which had been obtained was due not to this political party or to that, but to the mind and the arguments of Richard Cobden, he placed upon record a simple fact which all coming generations will acknowledge. (Cheers.) I hope you will not be displeased with me for turning to considerations that are not matter of congratulation between you and me or among yourselves, but I must own it is a great and heavy disappointment to see how much ground has been lost by the doctrines of Free Trade within the last five-and-twenty years. I have no doubt, as is well observed in this Address, that that dreadful militarism which lies like an incubus, like a vampire, upon Europe—(cheers)—is responsible for much of the mischief. But not for all, because Free Trade has receded in countries where militarism does not prevail. Free Trade has receded and Protection has gained ground in the United States of America, and, I yet more regret, and much more regret, to say, in the colonies of Great Britain. (Hear, hear.) We had no title to expect that America should respect in any degree our example ; but with regard to the colonies, though I do not say that we had a title to expect it, yet it would not have been unreasonable to hope that they might have attached great weight to our experience. It must always be borne in mind that England did not adopt Free Trade in a hurry. (Hear.) We spent twenty years of national legislative

life upon fighting out this battle. Between 1840 and 1861 or 1862 little else was done. That is a tremendous price to pay. During that struggle our convictions were tested, and our energies were braced, and we ought certainly to know what is the value of the purpose which we pursued at so heavy a cost. It was said at one time that the devil is wiser than of yore, and that Protection is becoming bolder than of yore. Protection used, at any rate, in old time to be confined to goods. Mr. Bright used sometimes to ask, "Why do you confine Protection to goods? Why don't you apply it to persons?" Why was it that the wealthy and powerful classes in this country, when they commanded its legislation, did not lay heavy prohibitory duties upon the importation of Italian singers? (Laughter.) Why was not the labour of the honest, hard-working, though not so melodious or skilful British singer entitled to Protection just as much as bad production or inferior production in any other department whatever? (Hear, hear.) Nobody placed the Italian singer under the ban of Protection. Gentlemen knew too well to sacrifice their own pleasures or their own comforts to the Protective doctrines when they came so near home as that. (Hear, hear.) Though it may seem almost like the incredible, yet, you all know, as has been well said, "truth is stranger than fiction," and Protection is now freely applied against persons and not simply against goods. I am not sure what the state of the law in the United States is, and whether the incursion, as it is, I believe, called, of the Chinese is simply resented, or whether it is barred by any kind of legislative restriction or pecuniary tax; but undoubtedly in the Australian colonies, amongst our own kith and kin, the Chinaman is either prohibited or heavily taxed upon his importation. This is Protection pure and simple, and it is quite right to



exhibit it in the face of the world. Why is the Chinaman thus taxed? Not because a superior race resents the contact—you may say the contamination—of an inferior one, not because civilisation recoils from companionship with a people who are considered to be uncivilised. The Chinaman comes in to compete with the hand labourer, and his entry is in some if not in all these colonies prohibited or restrained by heavy taxation, amounting in some cases, I believe, to virtual prohibition. Why? Because he does more work for the money. Because he is less exacting; because he is satisfied with less; and, moreover, because he consumes a great deal less of alcoholic liquor. (Laughter.) On these accounts the Chinaman is a formidable rival. It is not for his vices, but for his virtues, that he is dreaded; and on account of these virtues, Protection has developed itself in a manner and degree happily far beyond our experience, and is applied, as I admit in consistency it ought to be applied, to the importation of human beings as well as to the importation of things made by the labour of human beings.\* Well, let us look at the actual state of things at home and abroad. When we pass over the countries of the world and the countries of Europe, together with the great

\* Mr. Gladstone, a few days later, wrote the following explanatory letter, addressed to leading Journals, with regard to these observations :—" In my speech on the 12th instant, on the presentation of an Address to Mr. Bayley Potter, I made an allusion to the restraints now imposed in the United States and in some of the colonies on the importation of the Chinese, as exhibiting a remarkable development of the spirit of Protection. My statement was incomplete, and, therefore, not altogether just. It was alleged—and I fear it is true—that in cases where the Chinese are largely massed together, as happens in the great towns, or some of them, the social results are deplorable, and such as to warrant legislative or police restraint. I do not understand that these evils arise when the Chinese are not aggregated in large numbers, and it is to this latter class of cases only that my remarks can properly apply."

Republic of America, we see that although the doctrines of Free Trade had never been unconditionally accepted in any of those countries, yet there had been a kind of qualified progress towards them. That progress first was exchanged for a stationary condition of opinion, and of late opinion has been actively retrogressive. I know but two subjects of consolation—at least, I remember only two at this moment—in the survey of the state of opinion abroad with respect to freedom of trade. In some of our own colonies, I believe, the principles of Free Trade are still cherished. They have been cherished up to this time, under circumstances most disadvantageous, in the great and important colony of New South Wales. (Cheers.) But I did not mean to speak of that when I spoke of what was abroad; I was thinking of what was beyond our own special political connection, beyond the limits of the Empire. I do hope that we may look with some favourable expectation to the great strength and activity and clear convictions of the Free Trade party in the United States of America. (Cheers.) The accounts we hear of it and of its progress are such as to give rise to the belief that no long time is likely to pass before it may become triumphant at the polls. I cannot help mentioning another case, which is the more remarkable because it belongs to the European system, and that is the case of France. The final triumph of Mr. Cobden was to negotiate the treaty with France in 1860. Nearly twenty years ago that treaty expired, but although it had expired the legislation that was due to it remains almost entirely, I believe not in every particular, but almost entirely untouched. (Hear, hear.) We are still enjoying the vast advantages, and France is still enjoying the vast advantages, of a measure which involved on her part a great and bold advance towards the system of Free Trade. Now

is it not a very remarkable circumstance that while the countries around her have been moving in the wrong direction, France, who made the bold step in advance, has in the main maintained her ground? Why has she done so? I am not afraid to give you by way of conjecture my own opinion on the subject. You know, and we all know, that the effect of measures of Free Trade is to create strong and large bodies of friendly opinion in the different countries where they prevail, a friendly opinion which crosses the water, and which forms one of the strongest ties between one nation and another. (Hear, hear.) I firmly believe that it is the strong and powerful sentiment of friendship towards England which has been generated in France, and which has been generated mainly in consequence of the great work of Cobden, that has encouraged France, and enabled France to maintain her position. Long may she maintain it! May she even improve it! May she set an example to the Continent, where her vast influence always will be powerfully operative! And may she maintain along with it, and increase along with it, that sentiment of friendship which is so warmly reciprocated on this side of the Channel, and which is at once the basis and the fruit of close commercial relations! (Cheers.) If, however, we look to the world at large, the picture, as I have said, is not an encouraging one; and this state of opinion in other countries has even emboldened some champions of Protection—who had formerly been lurking in holes and corners—to venture out again into the light of day, and to endeavour to revive the struggle which, as I say, cost us a quarter of a century of our national life to determine. I find, however, among ourselves various grounds of congratulation, and one is that few indeed are the Protectionists in this country who find it expedient to call themselves by their proper name. (Cheers.)

They have shown great ingenuity in the invention of names, an ingenuity which I have sometimes seen exhibited by political parties when it was convenient to make a change in a somewhat damaged nomenclature. (Laughter.) And so the Protectionists made their appearance on the stage, first as Fair Traders. What can be more winning and attractive than the idea of fair trade? (Laughter.) Who would wish for any trade except fair trade? (Renewed laughter.) In this way it was hoped that Protectionism would find its way into incautious minds through avenues which would have been barred against the genuine article coming forward under its genuine designation. However, Fair Trade did make its appearance, as Mr. Bayley Potter will recollect, one evening in the House of Commons, about, I think, seven or eight years ago, with a modest motion for a Committee of Inquiry. I rejoice to say that the House of Commons would not entertain the motion. (Cheers.) Fair Trade was abashed and terrified, and ran away with its tail between its legs (laughter), and Fair Trade has never again come forward under that name. It has not been found useful to adopt a general name. There is much of the poison circulating in the system. I think there was a meeting, if I remember aright, of something like a thousand of the Conservative Association at Oxford, where you might count upon your fingers the number of those who dissented from the doctrine that Protection ought to be restored. But when it was so held that Protection ought to be restored, that was entirely in private and confidential communications amongst themselves, and they have never made bold to give effect to those communications in a public responsible proposition in Parliament. They have, however, not been altogether idle. It was too dangerous to attempt a reversal of the Free Trade policy wholesale, yet it seemed practicable enough to attack



it piecemeal. And the point of assault was chosen not without special recommendation. It was known or believed that the cheapness of sugar, which has been such an enormous blessing to the country (cheers), was in some respects due to the operation of a concealed, a latent, bounty granted by sugar-growing countries of Europe to the production of beetroot and the export of the yield of beetroot. It was therefore an act of obvious philanthropy to endeavour, by means of a Convention, to get rid of this kind of cheap sugar. For my own part, I frankly own I have no desire to see artificial cheapness produced by means of bounties. (Hear, hear.) I wish to see trade free; and in order to be free, it must be free from bounties, just as much as from prohibitions. (Hear, hear.) But this plan for a time seemed to thrive. The Powers of Europe were brought together in the persons of their representatives. A baron—(laughter)—was appointed on the part of Great Britain to represent the interests of this country. He gave such satisfaction to his colleagues that they passed to him all manner, I believe, of complimentary votes, describing the enlightened views and the courtesy of manner with which he had discharged his functions. A treaty was made, and that treaty bound Her Majesty to ask Parliament to place restraints upon the sugar trade, which not only would have greatly raised the price of sugar, but which would have introduced into your commerce a state of confusion such as never was dreamt of, and such as would have been found totally intolerable. That proposition, like the proposition for Fair Trade, for one night, and for one night only, if I recollect right, lived in the House of Commons. (Laughter.) Since then it has been no more heard of. It has absconded like a criminal, and no person will offer a reward for its apprehension. (Cheers.) Another plan has been very lately heard of, which

I must not confound with, and will not assimilate to, the schemes that I have lately described—that is, a plan of introducing into our currency what is called bimetallism. (Hear, hear.) I myself believe that no instructed disciple of Mr. Cobden ever will be or can be an advocate of bimetallism. But I make this confession freely, that there are not only good Liberals, but good Free Traders—perhaps not very many—who have contrived to represent the case to themselves in such a light that they have desired bimetallism on its own account, and not at all as a means of sapping and undermining the system of Free Trade. But I cannot disguise from myself this fact, that many of the most zealous bimetallists have also been the most zealous ex-Protectionists ; and being ex-Protectionists, and not being in a condition to mount the old livery, they have sought for garments that might more effectually serve their purpose by an apparent dissimilarity. They have at the same time smelt something in bimetallism which was exactly the thing they wanted. (Laughter.) They have smelt in it a rise of prices. A rise of prices all round—not as a result of increased consuming power, and therefore increased demand, but a rise of prices for the greater remuneration of producers—is the object of their idolatry. (Hear, hear.) They have followed bimetallism with this view, and so far as they are concerned—and I believe they are the vast majority of bimetallists—I heartily rejoice that on the late occasion, when they also showed themselves in Parliament, their cause received a very heavy fall. (Hear, hear.) Now do not let us conceal from ourselves that this country is almost at present the solitary citadel of Free Trade. Will you be able to hold out during the present adverse tide and currents—almost I may say, storm—of opinions in the world? Shall we unlearn that which we have learned? Shall we go back upon and cast away

our hard-earned experience? And shall we revive the state of things from which we have advanced so far that, if I may quote in a summary form the evidence of Mr. Giffen, I think it bears me out in saying that we have improved the position on the average of every labouring man in this country by 50 per cent.? (Cheers.) Are we bold enough to believe, and is it reasonable for us to believe, that we are in the right, and that the majority of the world is wrong? I do not wish to inflate national vanity. I do not wish to say that we are better or wiser than other people. But I do say this—that it often happens in the counsels of Providence that each nation, or that some particular nation, is appointed to work out great social, political, and economical problems for the benefit of the world at large. (Hear, hear.) It has been given to this country almost exclusively—undoubtedly far beyond any other example—to work out for the benefit of the world at large the enormous advantages of the representative system. In that representative system long we may be said to have stood alone, but by degrees one after another of the great countries of the world have come in, and the nations sprung from our own loins have given their countenance and currency to our example, and now the man would be deemed mad who wished to endeavour to denounce as a general principle what is termed the system of popular representation. (Hear, hear.) I do not think it is unreasonable to believe that something of the same kind may be true with respect to freedom of trade. We certainly have experience in the matter which no other country possesses. No other country has struggled, no other country has suffered, so much as we have done to attain this great consummation. (Cheers.) It tore asunder our political parties, it intercepted the work of legislation, it created ill-will, it sometimes went near the point even



of endangering the peace, before we could arrive at a solution of the great controversy. But all this experience gives us title to rely upon the conclusions that we have arrived at; and this experience does not depend alone upon such conclusions, but it depends upon the results which we see scattered over the length and breadth of the land, and which speak to us every day, and almost every moment, of our lives, in tones that cannot be misunderstood. (Cheers.) Without setting ourselves up above the world, yet with a consciousness of right, England has sometimes been ready to withstand the world. Here, if we withstand the world, it is only in inviting it to share the advantages which we have struggled for, which we have obtained, which now through a long course of years we have found demonstrating themselves from day to day with clearer and still clearer evidence. (Cheers.) I confidently anticipate that these doctrines of Free Trade, which mean nothing in the world except that each man and each country is to turn to the best account, without artificial interference and interruption, the powers and the gifts that God has given them—(cheers)—for there is the sum and substance, the Alpha and the Omega, of the creed—I believe that these doctrines, even if they be under temporary discredit in some of the countries of the world, yet are destined, by virtue of the inalienable charter of truth, to revive and obtain a general acknowledgment; and as they obtain that acknowledgment progressively you, Mr. Potter, will be enabled thankfully to recollect that, as an individual and as a Member of Parliament—most of all, perhaps, in your distinguished and lengthened connection with the Cobden Club—you have, through evil report and good report, stuck to the right and the true, and fought for the benefit of mankind, even when large portions of mankind were slow to

acknowledge that benefit themselves. (Loud and prolonged cheers, during which Mr. Gladstone formally presented the Address to Mr. Potter.)

#### MR. POTTER'S REPLY.

Mr. POTTER, who was heartily cheered on rising to reply, said : My Lord Granville, Mr. Gladstone, ladies and gentlemen, I cordially thank the members of the Cobden Club for the Address which has been presented to me, but I feel that if I could have had my own way I should have also liked recognition to have been made in that Address of the labours of those who have been associated with me on the Committee of the Club. During the last four-and-twenty years I have had the advantage and the assistance of many most able and excellent men. Without them I could have done nothing. I am not going to mention many names, but there is one gentleman, who is no longer with us—the late Sir Louis Mallet—(applause)—who was my staunchest friend in the early years of the Cobden Club, and whom we called the intellectual head of the Club. (Hear, hear.) I will mention one more, my late friend of a lifetime, Mr. Richard Baxter, who with me shared the duties of organisation and the more detailed labours of the Club. It would be invidious in me now to repeat the names of those with whom I am associated in the present Committee. All I can say is this—that without their aid, without their wisdom, and the use of their pens, which have been most freely and fully given for the benefit of the Club, we should never have been able to achieve what we have done. I would, however, mention the name of Mr. Probyn—(applause)—who occupies the position of honorary treasurer, which was held before him by Mr. Baxter, and who has been a most loyal supporter during the last four-and-twenty years. For this signal honour

done to me by the members I feel very grateful, but what words that I can use can express my appreciation of the honour done to me by Mr. Gladstone, who has presented the Address? What have I done that the foremost of all great men in the world—(cheers)—should have thus honoured me? Mr. Gladstone's philanthropy and his wisdom are familiar to all the world: he reminds me of the words of the American poet—

A thousand million lives are his  
Who holds the world in his sympathies.

(Cheers.) Then I feel very grateful for the presence of Lord Granville. (Cheers.) I have known Lord Granville for a great many years, and I think we have been found fighting generally on the same platform. (Hear, hear.) Lord Granville, the most courteous and genial of men, is also one of the wisest statesmen of the generation. (Hear, hear.) I was much struck, in reading the Life of Lord Russell a little time ago, with the letters on the course Lord Granville took in most difficult circumstances during the early portion of the American Civil War. I feel that England was indebted to him for saving us from the greatest calamity that could befall the world—a war between these two English-speaking peoples. (Cheers.) As time divulges the secrets of Cabinets, the wisdom of Lord Granville will be more universally known. I feel greatly indebted to him for the kindness he has done me in taking the chair to-day. (Hear, hear.) Now there are some of you who perhaps are not very familiar with the Cobden Club and its origin. It was established—or, rather, the idea of it originated—in March, 1866. I think Mr. Thorold Rogers—(hear, hear)—was the one who initiated it, and after consultation with

Mr. Bright it was thought that I, as a young Parliamentary hand—(laughter)—should perhaps have time to work it out. The object of the Cobden Club is a very wide one. It is to develop and encourage the spread of those economic and political principles with which Mr. Cobden's name is associated. Since the establishment of the Cobden Club there have been various subjects in which we have taken considerable interest, and on which we have spread a vast amount of information. Of course we have furthered Free Trade as far as we could, and we have been ready to attack Protection in whatever quarter it showed itself. (Laughter.) The great question to which Mr. Cobden attached importance in his later years was that of the land. He said, in his speech at Rochdale, in November, 1864, that he believed that if he were a young man he could take Adam Smith in his hand, and could establish a league which would ultimately carry Free Trade in land; and he believed that Free Trade in land would do as much good as Free Trade in corn had done. Well, on that question—both with regard to the tenure of land in foreign countries, and with regard to our own land laws—the Club has done its best to circulate sound information; and in the future I think we may almost venture to say our greatest object will be to help to form sound opinion on that question. The tide of democracy is rising. (Hear, hear.) I for one do not fear its progress. (Hear, hear.) If its course is wisely directed, and if obstacles which savour of monopoly and privilege are removed in time, the tide of democracy may refresh and strengthen the condition of the people of this country; but if difficulties are to be avoided, it must be done by those statesmen who will prepare themselves and the country for the inevitable. (Prolonged applause.)



## MISS COBDEN.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I have very great pleasure in asking Miss Cobden to address you.

Miss COBDEN, who was greeted with repeated cheers, said: The Committee of the Cobden Club have entrusted to me a very pleasant task, which I gladly now perform, though I cannot help feeling that there are many persons present who would perform it more effectively and in more eloquent words. I do feel real pleasure, then, in rising to propose the best thanks of the meeting to Mr. Gladstone for the share he has taken in the proceedings of to-day. This event will be recorded as one of the most interesting in the annals of the Cobden Club. It unites in our minds three Englishmen who have had in their life's work but one object, one purpose—namely, that of furthering by all the means in their power the well-being and the happiness of their fellow-creatures. (Applause.) Through good report and through evil report these three men have remained firm to their great trust, without desiring any reward but that which comes to them with the knowledge that they have helped the poor of this country and of Ireland to a hope and a belief of better things yet to be attained. (Cheers.) All present, I am sure, heartily join in the hope that Mr. Potter may for many years to come carry forward this great life-work of his, and that he may be the means of sowing broadcast throughout the length and breadth of the land the seed of those principles which are summed up in the motto of the Cobden Club, "Free Trade, Peace, Goodwill among Nations." (Hear, hear.) And I am sure I am only expressing what is the prayer of all of us here when I say that I hope that Mr. Gladstone will for many years to come lead forward the Liberal party—

(loud cheers)—to carry out those great measures of reform which will add most materially to the well-being of the men and women of this country, and confer still greater lustre, if that were possible, on a name that “is not for an age but for all time.” (Cheers.)

MR. PROBYN.

Mr. J. W. PROBYN said: Ladies and gentlemen, the Committee did me the honour, as the honorary treasurer of the Cobden Club, to ask me to second the vote of thanks to Mr. Gladstone which has been so feelingly proposed by Miss Cobden. And in doing so, I venture to make just one or two remarks. They arise from the eloquent address which Mr. Gladstone has given us. He has pointed out to us that, though Free Trade is very firmly fixed and very hopefully situated for the future in this country, the battle of Free Trade is by no means over; that we are surrounded, I may say, by more or less Protectionist countries on all sides. Now, I do hope that the members of the Cobden Club will lay that fact to heart, and more especially the younger members; and that they will rally round us still more firmly and more warmly in the future than they have done in the past. I know that there are many who think that Free Trade is a foregone conclusion. No, it is not a foregone conclusion anywhere, as Mr. Gladstone has so seriously pointed out. And, therefore, the rising generation of English politicians should be on the watch, that at all times and seasons they may be prepared to meet and to expose the introduction of insidious Protectionist principles, whether brought forward by those calling themselves Fair Traders, or by any other pleasing names, and whether they touch the sugar bounties or any other subject whatsoever. When I came into this

room, I began to be afraid that I belonged quite to the older generation. But Mr. Gladstone, and our Chairman, and my old friend Mr. Potter, have carried back their recollections so far that I begin to hope that I have made some mistake. At any rate, I am afraid that I am not to be numbered amongst the rising generation; and it is, therefore, to them that I especially address myself in calling upon them to rally round the cause of Free Trade—not only to maintain the cause in this country, but to spread the principles of Free Trade amongst other nations, and especially in our own colonies. There is one little fact which came under my notice not very long ago, and which is well worth the consideration of the younger members of our Club; and it is this: that one of the best arguments that we can use in favour of Free Trade is to point to what the condition of England itself was under the Protectionist system. (Hear, hear.) Do not neglect that point. Do not look merely to the abstract principles or to the present prosperity of the country; but learn from the past what was the terrible state of the country under the system of Protection, and then compare that condition with the present condition of England under the system of Free Trade. Not very long ago I was present at a meeting in an agricultural district on this question of Free Trade, and with the help of a very good pamphlet which has been published by the Club (it was drawn up by my friend Mr. Leadam, a member of our Committee, and called “Forty Years of Protection” or some such title) I was pointing out the difference between England then and England now; and when I sat down, there rose up in the body of the hall an old agricultural labourer—I should think, some seventy years of age—and all he said was this: “I only wish that the young men about me could have passed through what I



have passed through as a young man—could go back to the years 1840, 1841, and 1842, when all our manufactories in the North were being stopped, when bread was high, when wages were low, when pauperism was abounding ; and then do not let them come to me and say that Free Trade has been a failure.” Now, if we only meet our Protectionist friends—or our Protectionist political foes—with facts of that sort, we shall be able to strengthen our cause throughout the country ; and, after all, some such facts as these will—at any rate, with the large mass of people—tell more than all the refined arguments which can be used by those who have studied the question in the abstract. I have nothing more to add but to express the pleasure which it gives me to be permitted to second the vote of thanks to you, sir (Mr. Gladstone), for your presence on this occasion ; to thank you, not only for coming here to-day to do honour to our Honorary Secretary and Chairman of Committee, Mr. Potter, but also for what you have done to-day to strengthen the hands of that great cause of Free Trade for which you, and those who worked with you, have in the past done so much ; and we trust that in the future there will be many to follow in your steps, to further these great and noble principles of “Free Trade, Peace, and Goodwill amongst Nations,” which lay at the heart and at the foundation of the work of Richard Cobden. (Applause.)

The resolution was passed with acclamation.

#### MR. GLADSTONE'S REPLY.

Mr. GLADSTONE, who was received with renewed cheering, said : Ladies and gentlemen, if it were according to true form in a public meeting, I ought to hold up my hand for a vote of thanks to you for having allowed me to address

you upon a subject of very great interest and, under a conviction which I sincerely entertain, of strong necessity. It is needful, if we are Free Traders, that we should all individually resolve not only to hold by our convictions, but to do the best we can to maintain and propagate them, and, while respecting the liberty of all other nations, steadily to maintain that it is the common cause of all—not the cause of one country, but the cause of the world—which we have been maintaining and are maintaining, and which it is to me a peculiar, special, and crowning pleasure to think that Miss Cobden should have been here to-day to join us in. (Cheers.)

#### VOTE OF THANKS TO LORD GRANVILLE.

Sir THOMAS FARRER: My lords, ladies, and gentlemen, a great honour has been entrusted to me as one of the younger members of the Cobden Club—one, I mean, who has only of late joined its ranks—the honour, namely, of asking you to give a hearty vote of thanks to our chairman, Lord Granville. (Cheers). Although I am so young a member of the Club, I am yet old enough to remember his entrance into public life. It was about the time when I myself, first in a subordinate capacity, joined the Board of Trade; and I very well remember my then chief and master, Lord Taunton, then Mr. Labouchere, saying to me, “They are laughing at us out-of-doors for having put the Master of the Buckhounds into a political office. They will not laugh long. Those who know Lord Granville, and who know the stock of which he comes, know that his motto is ‘Thorough,’ and that his riding will be as resolute in the field of politics as it is in the hunting-field.” What was then in the air was Free Trade. The Corn Laws had been repealed, and the Navigation Laws had

either been repealed, or were on the point of being repealed; and what Mr. Labouchere referred to was Lord Granville's hearty, thorough adherence to Free Trade doctrines, of which you have already heard from Mr. Gladstone. Well, we have since that time seen Lord Granville in an atmosphere often discouraging and hostile—(hear, hear)—in office and out of office, championing successfully, not only the cause of Free Trade, but every other cause which is dear to Liberal hearts. (Cheers.) We ourselves have watched his run in the political hunting-field—a run of no common duration, a run in which there have been many brilliant bursts, in which there have been some checks, and in which there have been and are many stiff places. And we can all join in bearing witness to the entire fulfilment of Mr. Labouchere's prediction. (Hear, hear.) We know that among our political riders there is no one who has ridden with more resolute courage or with a firmer seat, none perhaps who has ridden with so light and so delicate a hand. (Cheers.)

Sir LYON PLAYFAIR: Ladies and gentlemen, I have simply to second the resolution which my friend Sir Thomas Farrer has proposed, that a vote of thanks should be given to Lord Granville for his conduct in the chair. I need not say that no one could have been in the chair more appropriately. No one has been a more consistent Free Trader, or a more steady and consistent supporter of every Liberal measure, from times—I will not say how long, but my experience of his sympathy with Liberal measures in regard to trade goes so far back as forty years. There is one remark that I should like to make with regard to what Mr. Gladstone has said. He spoke with hope of the United States, and so do I. But if you were

to look at what the United States are doing. just now in regard to Protection, you would be utterly hopeless. But it is the dying spasm of the whale. This week I was reading the M'Kinley Bill now passing through Congress for the "reform" of the Tariff; and it is going to be a reform all the wrong way. I have put down a few of the things upon which that democratic country is about to raise the tax. They purpose to raise the tax upon blankets, clothing, beans, potatoes, eggs, knives, tools—upon almost everything that the working classes have to use. And notably there is one subject—whether it is intended as a protest against Free Trade I don't know—but there is one interesting article which formerly was free, and now is to be put into the taxed list: English plum puddings are to be taxed. (Laughter.) Now, I ought in justice to add that some things are to be put upon the free list that hitherto have been taxed. And the working men of America will no doubt appreciate the compensation very much indeed when they understand that amongst the articles to be relieved of taxation are cat-gut, whip-gut, worm-gut, dandelions, sea-weed, and—as a compliment, no doubt, to our great Australian colonies—kangaroo skins. (Laughter.) Well, that of course is a consolation for the immense taxation that they are putting upon all material commodities. But I believe it is the spasms of the dying animal. I am very glad that the Protectionists are going so thoroughly into Protection in that country. I know America well—I visit it every year. I have seen the growth of Free Trade principles in America; and I believe that the New England provinces are going to be Free Trade provinces. And I venture to state that I do not believe that there will be another Presidential election without such a large reform of the tariff being brought before the nation.

In our sense of Free Trade the United States are very far behind. But a notable reduction of the tariff may come before many years. I am very glad to have had the opportunity of thanking Lord Granville for presiding on this occasion.

The resolution was carried, as before, by acclamation.

LORD GRANVILLE, rising amidst prolonged cheering, said: I rise gratefully to acknowledge the vote of thanks you have just passed. They are thanks very lightly won. Lord Melbourne once said, "I like butter; you cannot lay it on too thick." (Laughter.) Well, I think I have had some butter of the finest quality to-day: there is no margarine in this hall. (Renewed laughter.) I am bound to say that I can readily excuse even very great exaggeration of compliment coming from two old personal, official, and political friends like Sir Thomas Farrer and Sir Lyon Playfair, and there are certain things which I admit. I really think that I can lay claim to having been a consistent supporter of the Liberal party—(applause)—and I am very proud of it, perhaps more proud than some philosophers would think quite just. But if there is one thing of which I am still prouder, it is the one so kindly alluded to by Mr. Gladstone, and by others who have spoken—namely, my one great exception in going against my party on a serious matter—when I voted with Mr. Charles Villiers, whose letter you have heard read, and from whom I have received a private letter, full of genial sympathy with the movement of this afternoon—when I voted with him against my party, but in anticipation of their further views. (Hear, hear.) I cannot sit down without thanking Mr. Potter for his very kind words, and will he allow me to say that I entirely appreciate his feelings to-day? For I think it is a proud moment for any man. I believe



we who think that Free Trade legislation was the greatest benefaction ever conferred upon this nation, must admit, together with Sir Robert Peel, that there were three men who contributed practically more than any others to the blessings which we enjoy—Cobden, Bright, and Gladstone. (Cheers.) Talking of Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Gladstone knows, but we do not know, how far Sir Robert Peel's colleague in the Board of Trade influenced and assisted Sir Robert Peel. (Hear, hear.) I think that to Mr. Potter, the intimate personal friend of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, who is so well and eloquently described in the Address as the depository of their traditions, it must be a singular satisfaction to have that connection put forward by Mr. Gladstone, of whom he has been an equally loyal follower all his life. (Hear, hear.) I cannot help thinking that there must have been another source of satisfaction to him—not only the feeling which you, ladies and gentlemen, have shown, but the presence of Miss Cobden here to-day, and, I may add, of Mr. Cobden's only grandson. (Cheers). I heartily congratulate Mr. Potter on the proceedings of this afternoon, and thank you most cordially for your kindness to myself. (Cheers.)

The proceedings then terminated.













